UPON A LONG LONG REFLECTION, I LOVED THE SOIL AND GRIT OF THE FIELD WHEN DRAINING WATER FROM IT WITH A SPONGE ON RAINY DAYS. I WAS THE TYPE TO TRY AND AVOID LEAVING MY FOOTPRINTS ON THE FIELD'S SURFACE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHEN I DID MAINTENANCE ON IT.

BUT YOU'LL NEVER KNOW FROM LOOKING AT THE MESS IN MY WORKROOM NOW...

TERAJIMA YUUJI

KCM4598
KC
ダイヤのA
29
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Ace of Diamond

The first round of the Fall tournament, on which a ticket to the Senbatsu rides.
The opponents are a powerhouse from East Tokyo, Tetsu Seiren ran interferes with the fierce pitching duel between Sendo's Furuya and Tetsu's Miyuki.
After a long break, the game finally resumes, but something is off about Furuya...
Who can clear away the overhanging dark clouds..?

絶賛好評発売中

KC 寺嶋裕二作品

■GIANT STEP 全4巻
■ダイヤのA ①～

以下続刊

COVER ILLUSTRATION ● YUJI TERAJIMA
COVER DESIGN ● KAZUHIRO FUKUMURA+ME

2011.12
KC

29

寺嶋裕二（てらじまゆうじ）

ダイヤのA（エース）

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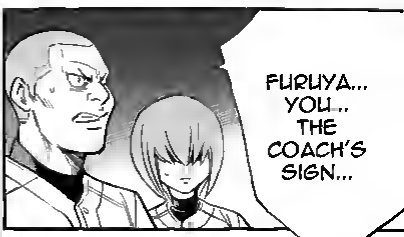
●週刊少年マガシン2011年第33号～第43号

この物語はフィクションであり、
実在の人物・団体・出来事などとは、
一切関係ありません。

ダイヤのA
キィン
AHHH TRYING TO HIT ON THE FIRST PITCH, HUH...
POPPING IT UP IS THE LAST THING YOU SHOULD DO! IT'S A GUARANTEED OUT!

AND HERE I THOUGHT THEY'D BE PLAYING IT SAFE AND ADVANCING THE RUNNER...

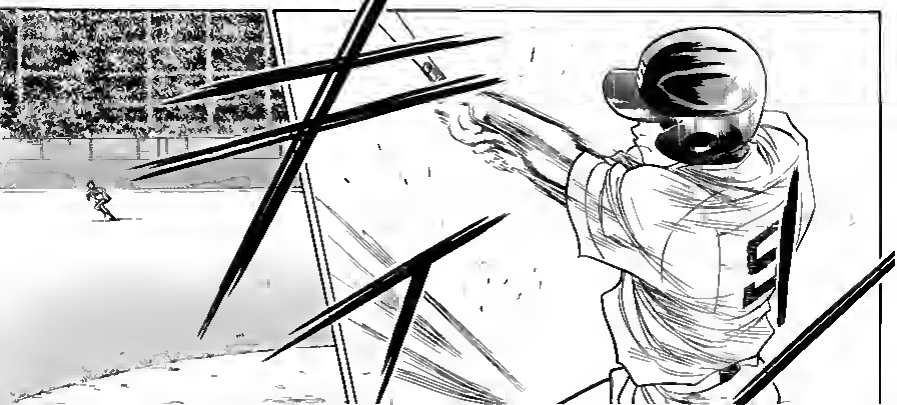
DID YOU THINK YOU'D TRY AND GET A RUN BACK WITH YOUR BAT?
OR DID YOU JUST STAND IN THE BATTER'S BOX WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT ANYTHING?


FURUYA... YOU... THE COACH'S SIGN...

AH...

CHAPTER 247

ON & OFF



THE SECOND BASE RUNNER TAKES OFF!
HMM IF ONLY THEY ADVANCED THE RUNNER TO THIRD EARLIER...
IT WAS ODD THEY DIDN'T
2 OUTS, RUNNER ON THIRD.
Fwh
IF THE BATTER HITS A LONG ONE, SEIDOU WILL SCORE FIRST!

AKIO

STRIKEOUT!!!
SEIDOU HIGH IS UNABLE TO SCORE ANY RUNS!
THEY COULDN'T CAPITALIZE WITH A RUNNER ON SECOND AND NO OUTS!

GET OVER IT!
WE'RE UP AGAINST THEIR CLEANUPS NEXT, SO WE GOTTA ATTACK FROM THE FIRST PITCH!
NOW, LET'S GO!
FURUYA ...
SHOW 'EM THE SAME PITCHING YOU DID IN THE PREVIOUS INNING!

FOCUS ON GETTING 1 OUT FIRST.
GO AND RETIRE THE LEADOFF BATTER!
NOD
LET'S GO!
YEEEAH!!!
THIS IS THE INNING WHERE YOU GOTTA OO IT!
IN THIS INNING, IN ONE SWOOP ...!

THEIR BATTERY HAS STARTED MIXING IN BREAKING BALLS
...IS WHAT I'D WANNA SAY, BUT!
FOR NOW, JUST CALM DOWN
BUT YOUR TARGET HASN'T CHANGED! IT'S STILL FAST-BALLS!
AND ONLY GO FOR EASY-TO-HIT STUFF! NOTHING ELSE!
YOU'LL BE PLAYING INTO THEIR HANDS BY GOING FOR A HIT EARLY ON.
TIGER! YOU GOTTA BECOME A TIGER!!!
--THE SECOND HALF OF THE GAME...
SO IT'S THE TIGER TODAY
IF YOU SEE AN EASY PITCH...
BAM
MAKE THEIR PITCHER THROW AS MANY PITCHES AS POSSIBLE, DRAINING HIS STAMINA AND CORNERING HIM BIT BY BIT, BY BIT, BY BIT...

...IS WHEN THE PITCHERS' ABILITIES WILL BE BARED FOR EVERYONE TO SEE...
JUST HOW MUCH DOES THE WEATHER HATE US...?
TOKYO
THE RAIN GOT HEAVIER AGAIN..

BALL!
T-TO MISS THE STRIKE ZONE BY THAT MUCH.
YOU'RE STRAINING TOO MUCH! RELAX YOUR SHOULDER!

DID HE ACTUALLY LOSE ALL OF THAT FOCUS DURING THE BREAK?
FOCUS, FOCUS ...
KAWA-KAMI!
I TRUST THAT YOU'RE READY TO GO IN ANY MOMENT?

OISHOO!
TO THINK, THAT FURUYA WOULD FALL APART LIKE THIS ESPECIALLY AFTER HIS GREAT PERFORMANCE BEFORE THE BREAK..
STILL 4 INNINGS TO GO
I SHALL NOT LOSE TO THE STORM!
I SHALL NOT LOSE TO THE RAIN! I SHALL NOT LOSE TO THE WIND!
SAWAMURA! SORRY TO SPOIL YOUR FUN,
BUT KAWAKAMI IS THE PRIORITY.
I lost...
I SHALL NOT LOSE TO TEITOU OR TO FURUYA
OR TO MYSELF!

BUT... HE NEVER STOPPED WARMING UP, EVEN DURING THE BREAK...
HE TREATS THE BULLPEN LIKE IT'S HIS BACKYARD...
SHUT UP! AND DON'T RUN STRAIGHT TO ME WITH YOUR EVERY LITTLE THING!
KANE-MARU ~~~
PLEASE CATCH FOR ME ~~~~!

...

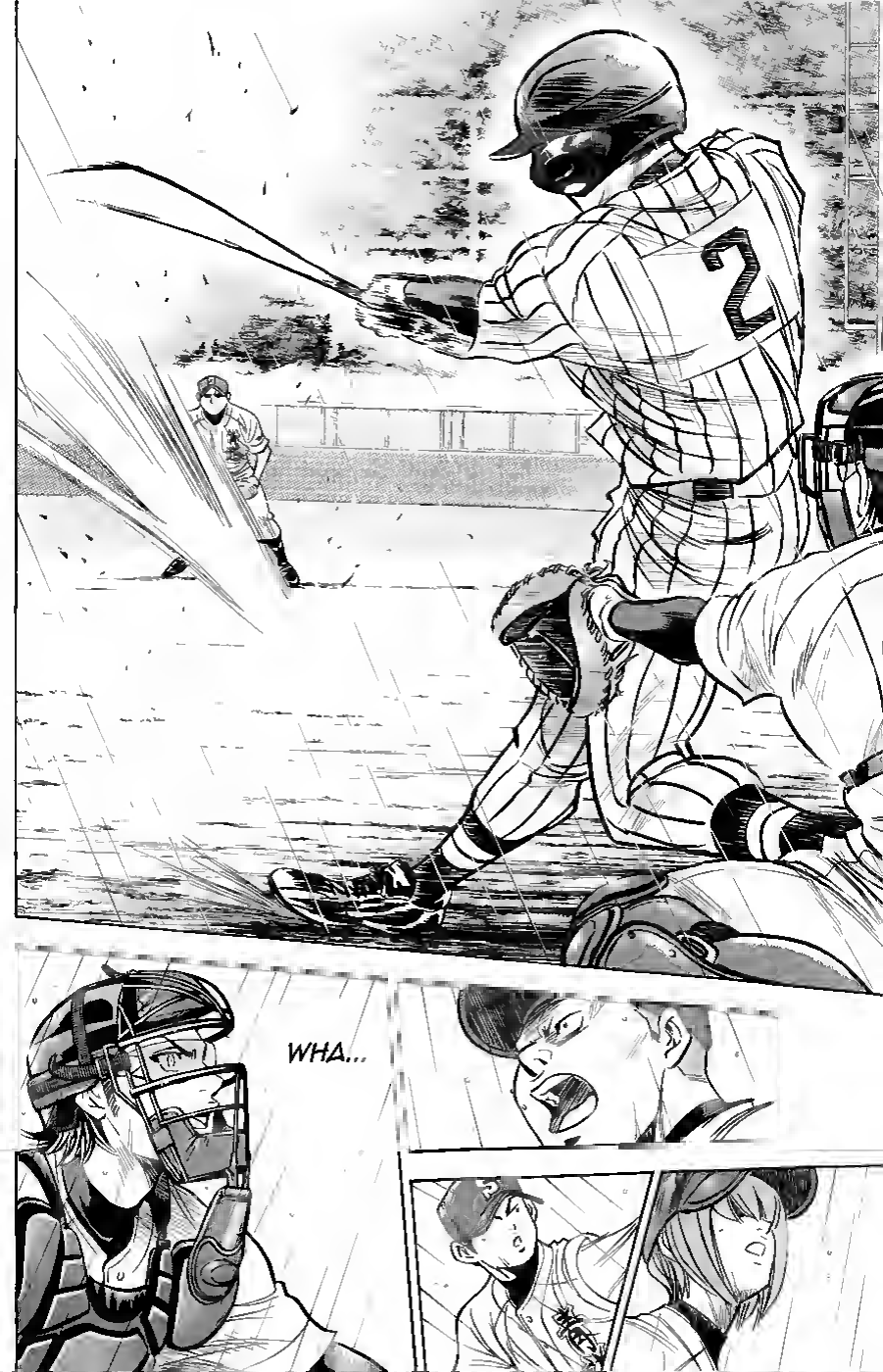
A WALK FOR THE LEADOFF HITTER!

BALL
FOUR!

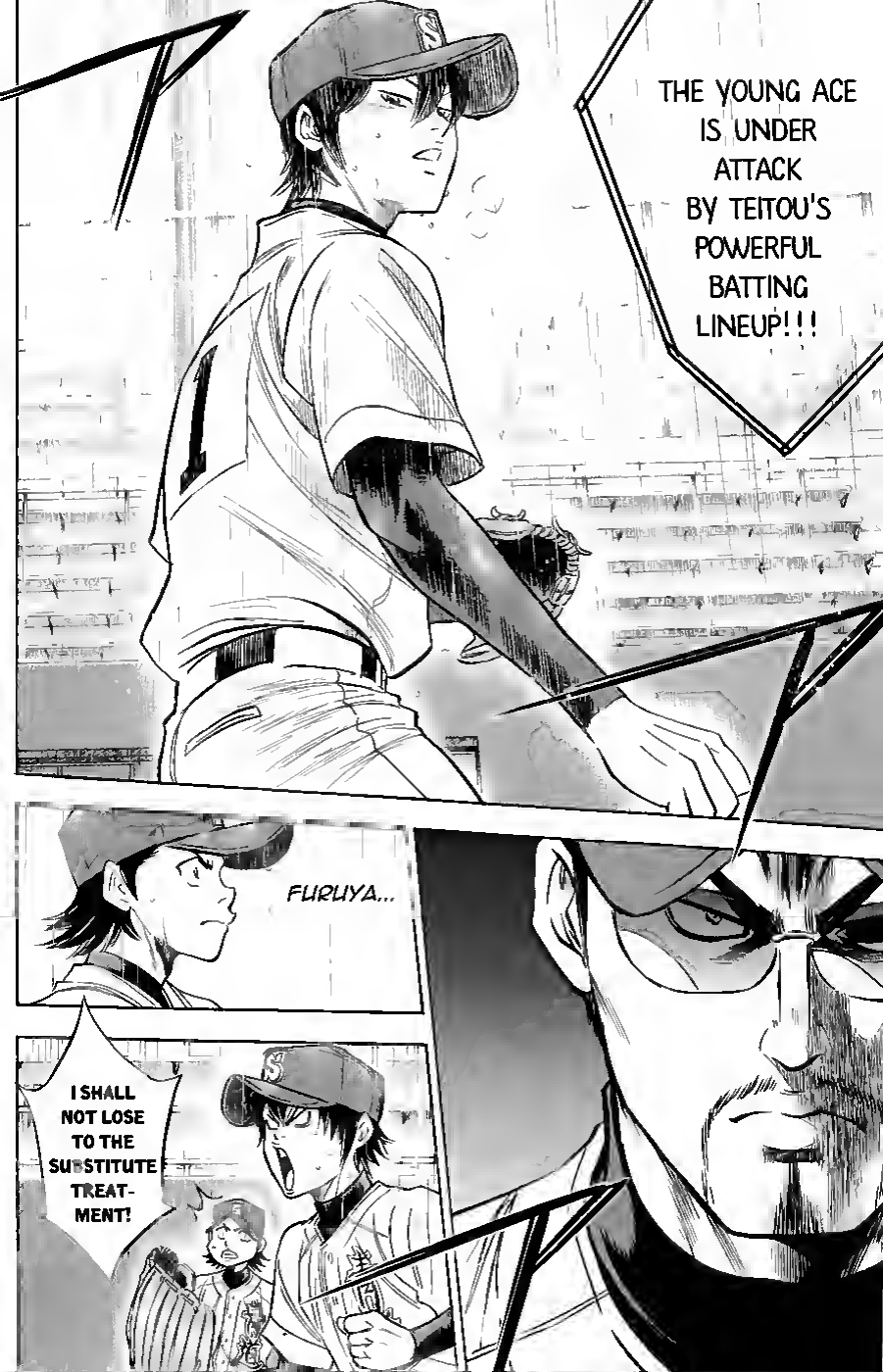
UP NEXT IS THE 4TH BATTER, INUI-KUN.
THE FIRST PITCH, KENGO...
IF THEY TAKE THE EASY WAY AND TRY TO GO FOR THE COUNT ON THE FIRST PITCH
ITU

SLAM IT WITH A BAM!
WITH A BAM!
NO NEED FOR A STRIKE.
WE'LL PUT A DAMPER ON HIS EAGERNESS TO HIT WITH THIS
2

TOKYO


WHA...

THIS IS WHERE HIS FINGERS SLIPPED?!
HE'S LIKE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS INNING!!!
IT IS DRIVEN INTO THE GAP BETWEEN RIGHT AND CENTER FIELD!!!
NO OUTS, RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD!


THE YOUNG ACE IS UNDER ATTACK BY TEITOU'S POWERFUL BATTING LINEUP!!!
FURUYA...
I SHALL NOT LOSE TO THE SUBSTITUTE TREAT-MENT!

CHAPTER 248

OUT OF ORDER

GO, GO, TEITOU!
GO, GO, TEITOU!
TOP OF THE SIXTH, NO OUTS, RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD.
THE SEIDOU DEFENSE IS PLAYING IN.
HUH...?

I THINK I'M IN TROUBLE...
TEITO
MY BODY FEELS HEAVY...
OUR SITUATION IS DANGEROUS, BUT I CAN'T REALLY BRING MYSELF TO CARE
2

IGNORE THE RUNNERS.
FOCUS ONLY ON THE BATTER!
C'MON...
QUICK!
3
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER AND DO IT!

IT GOES THROUGH THE HOLE BETWEEN THIRD AND SHORT!
THE 5TH BATTER, SUMIDA, COMES THROUGH WITH AN RBI!
THE SECOND BASE RUNNER IS ALSO ON HIS WAY TO HOME PLATE!

LEFT FIELDER, ASOU, THROWS BACK HOME!
LIKE HELL I'LL LET YA!!!

OUT!
ALRIGHT
A QUICK THROW FROM LEFT
PREVENTS A SECOND RUN FROM BEING SCORED!
He's a guy who gets the job done when it counts!
See!
See!

BUT THE FACT REMAINS: TEITOU HIGH MANAGED TO BREAK THE TIE
AND SCORE FIRST!
THE HIT WAS CLEAN, WASN'T IT?
TO BE EXPECTED, I SUPPOSE, CONSIDERING THAT THE LINEUP IS ON ITS THIRD CYCLE
JUST NOW, HE DIDN'T EVEN ATTEMPT TO RUN TO BACK UP THE CATCHER AT THE PLATE
EH?
FURUYA-KUN'S BEEN STRANGE SINCE THE GAME RESUMED...

IT'S LIKE HE'S DISTRACTED AND SPACING OUT...
OR SHOULD I SAY, HE'S HARDLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THE GAME...
FOR STARTERS, CALM DOWN!
TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS
I WANT YOU TO FOCUS ONLY ON THE BATTERS
I KNOW HE DOESN'T REALLY HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THESE TYPES OF GAMES, BUT...
I NEVER IMAGINED THAT A RAIN DELAY WOULD AFFECT HIM THIS MUCH...
OKYO

HE'S GOT OUTSTANDING TALENT
BUT IS TOO PRONE TO ALL SORTS OF WEAKNESSES...
WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING... AT THIS RATE...
THE ONLY WAY TO WORK THOSE KINKS OUT IS TO LET HIM AMASS EXPERIENCE
BY BEING PATIENT WITH HIM AND HAVING HIM PITCH THE WHOLE GAME...
FOR NOW, JUST TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME!
AND RUN TO COVER BASE LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT!
Shout
17
Nnn mm mm

SAWA-
MURA!
BALL!
AAH HE'S STRAINING MORE AND MORE

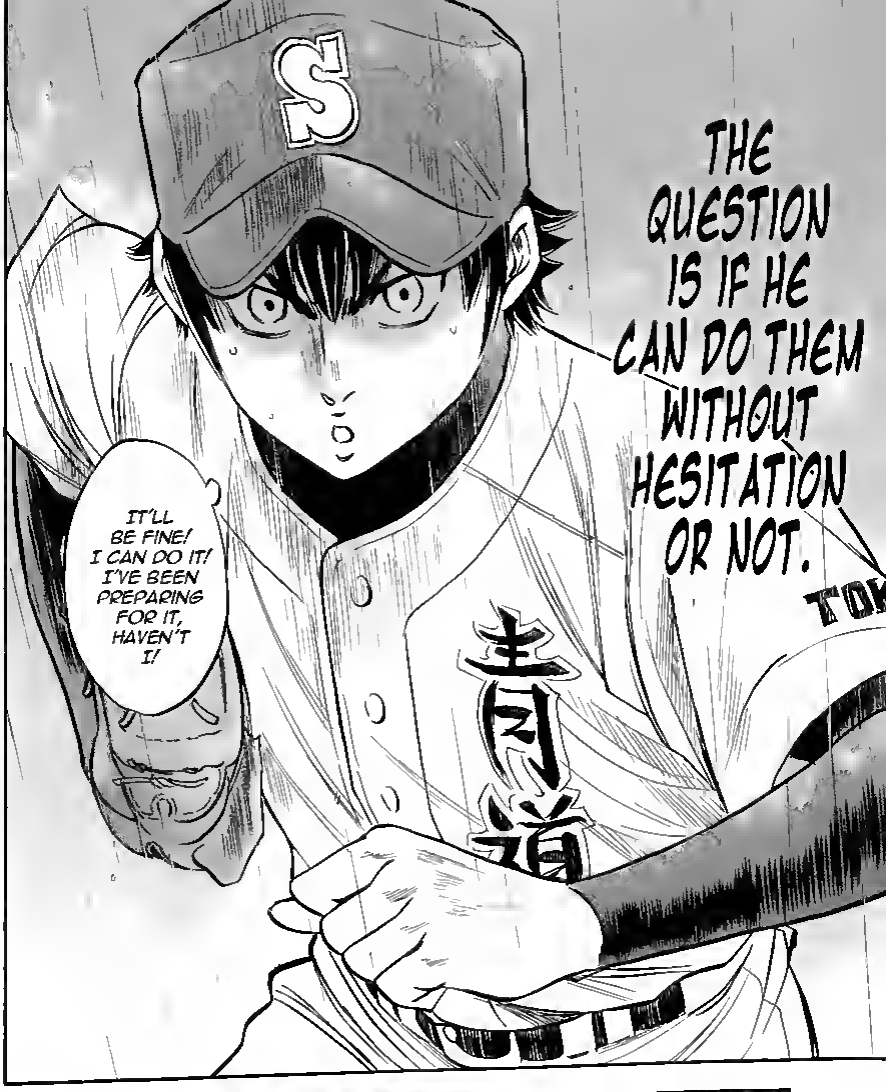
WE'RE ON A DOWNWARD SPIRAL...
YOUR SHOULDER IS STIFFENING!
MAKE SURE YOU SWING YOUR ARM ALL THE WAY THROUGH!
THE MORE HE ENDS UP STRAINING, AND HIS PITCHES START TO LOSE SPEED AND POWER...
THE MORE I TRY TO GET HIM BACK INTO SHAPE,
THEY CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MORE RUNS, OR THEY'LL BE DONE FOR
ESPECIALLY WITH MUKAI BEING IN GOOD CONDITION

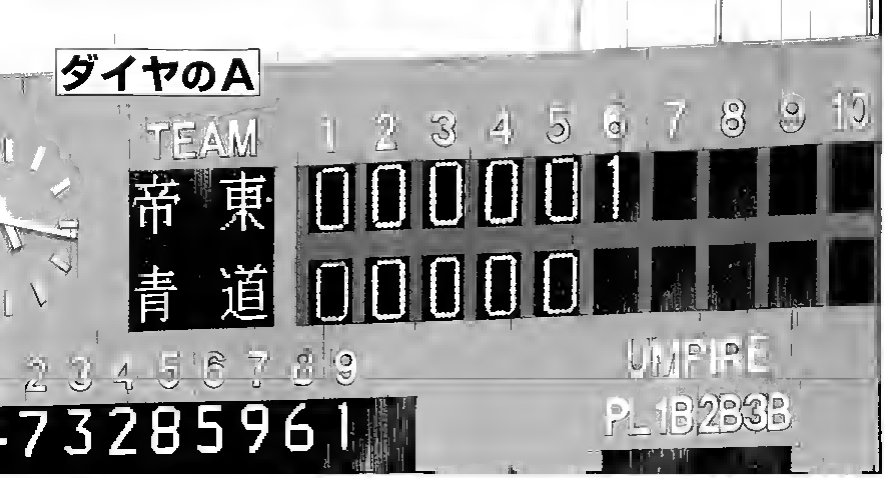
BALL!
WHOA!
HE DID A GREAT JOB CATCHING THAT.
TOKYO

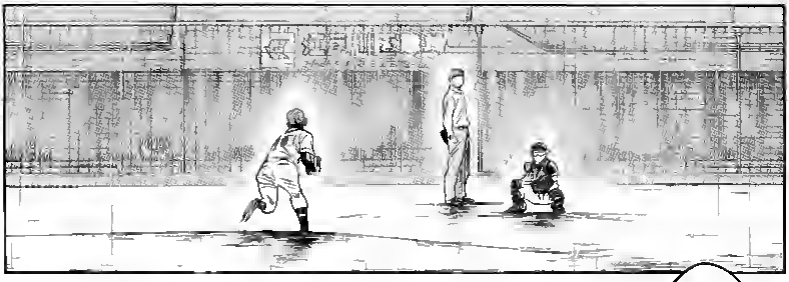
HE JUST FELL APART, THAT'S ALL.
AND HE'S PROBABLY SHOWING US HIS TRUE COLORS.
WHAT'S WITH HIM! YOU'D NEVER THINK THAT THIS WAS THE SAME PITCHER FROM THE PREVIOUS INNING.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET HIM BACK INTO THE GAME?
HE COMPLETELY SHUT DOWN ON US...
WHAT DO I DO? HOW DO I FIX HIM?
AT THIS RATE, WE---
MIYUKI!

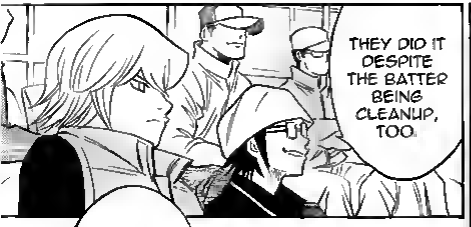
JERSEY NUMBER 18, SAWAMURA ...?
DON'T TELL ME THEY'RE ALREADY SWITCHING PITCHERS?
THAT'S A REAL EARLY SWITCH...
ONE OUT, RUNNER ON SECOND, THE COUNT IS 2 BALLS, NO STRIKES, AND THE BATTER WILL BE TARGETING THE FIRST STRIKE YOU THROW.
MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION!
SAWAMURA EIJUN.
HE IS ALSO A FIRST YEAR..
nod

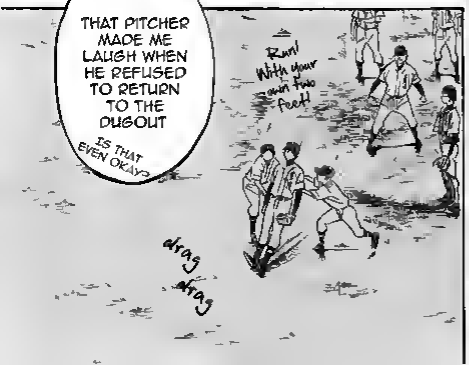
A FEARLESS KID WHO ATTACKED THE INSIDE LIKE CRAZY IN THE FINAL AGAINST INAJITSU.
I REMEMBER HIM. IT WAS IMPRESSIVE HOW HE CHANGED THE GAME FLOW FOR HIS TEAM.
STILL, TO SUB OUT THE ACE SO EARLY...
ALRIGHT!
SOME HARSH ORDERS— YOU DISH OUT HUH, KATAOKA-KUN.
:
OF COURSE. WITH FURUYA IN HIS CURRENT CONDITION, A PITCHER CHANGE IS UNAVOIDABLE
TOK
NICE TO MEET YOU ALL!
BUT... I NEVER EXPECTED IT TO BE SAWAMURA...
OH WELL... THINGS HE CAN DO ARE LIMITED.


THE QUESTION IS IF HE CAN DO THEM WITHOUT HESITATION OR NOT.
IT'LL BE FINE! I CAN DO IT! I'VE BEEN PREPARING FOR IT, HAVEN'T I!


TEAM 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
帝東 0 0 0 0 0 1
青道 0 0 0 0 0
UMPIRE
PL 1B 2B 3B
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
-7 3 2 8 5 9 6 1




THEY DID IT DESPITE THE BATTER BEING CLEANUP, TOO.

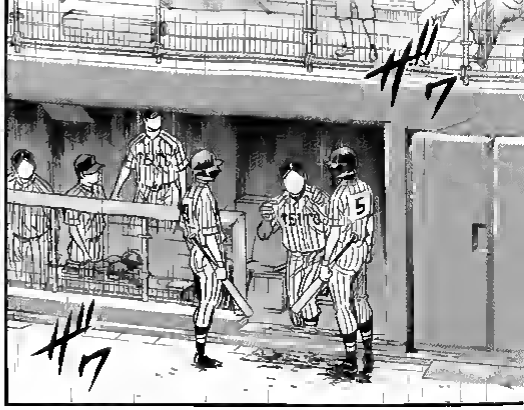

THAT PITCHER MADE ME LAUGH WHEN HE REFUSED TO RETURN TO THE DUGOUT
IS THAT EVEN OKAY?
Run! With your own two feet!
drag drag

NOW, THIS IS A SURPRISE
THEY SURE BENCHED THEIR STAR AND LINCHPIN QUICKLY, EH..

I'll lock you out with your confidence so let's go!
BUT MAYBE HE'S AS HUMAN AS THE REST OF US? OR MAYBE JUST WAY TOO STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND EASY TO READ...
I THOUGHT HE WAS THE COOL MONSTER-TYPE,
THERE IS NO WAY THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT GUY OFF THE MOUND IF HE WAS THE INDISPUTABLE ACE AND THE TEAM'S MAINSTAY.
THIS JUST MEANS THAT THE COACH DOESN'T TRUST HIM NEARLY ENOUGH.
OH. YOUR EVALUATION IS HARSHER THAN I EXPECTED.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW IS HOW THAT RELIEF PITCHER DOES
THEY'RE DOWN 1 RUN WITH A RUNNER ON SECOND, 1 OUT, AND THE COUNT AT 2 BALLS, NO STRIKES

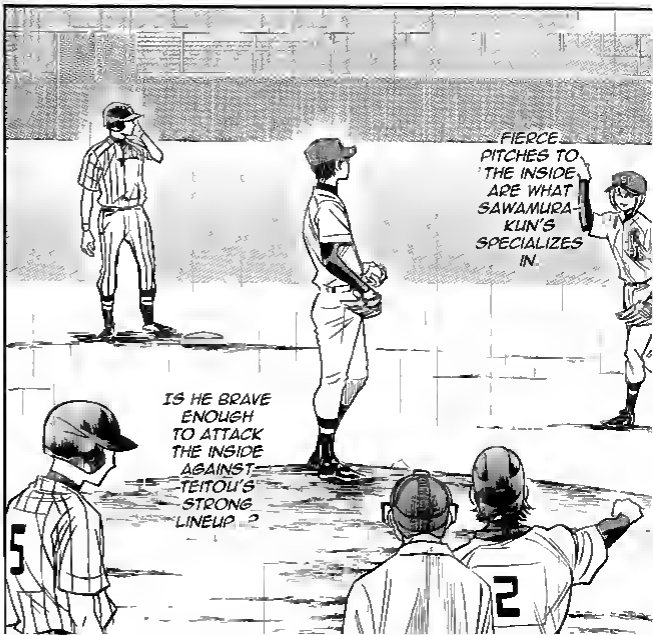
THE QUESTION IS IF THAT PITCHER CAN STOP THE UNFAVORABLE FLOW OR NOT.
5961
378
CHAPTER 249
PROOF

And there goes the 4th hit of this!
With a BAM!
TEITO


TEITO
5

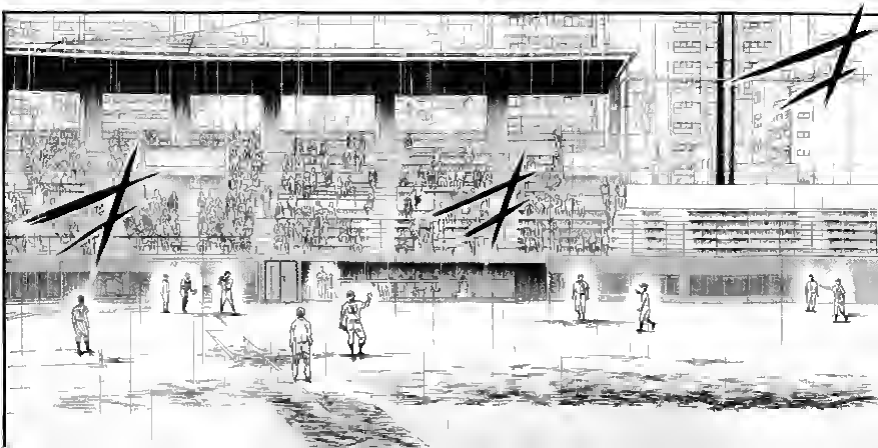
SAWAMURA-KUN IS UP!
SURPRISINGLY, THIS IS HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN THE FULL TOURNAMENT.
YEAH... MAKES SENSE SINCE THE 7TH 8TH AND 9TH BATTER HE'LL BE FACING AGAINST ARE ALL LEFT-HANDED.

fidget
fidget


FIERCE PITCHES TO THE INSIDE ARE WHAT SAWAMURA-KUN'S SPECIALIZES IN.
IS HE BRAVE ENOUGH TO ATTACK THE INSIDE AGAINST TEITOU'S STRONG LINEUP...?
5
2

SO HE DECIDED TO THROW THE GAME, HUH.
I-IS HE REALLY SURE ABOUT THIS...?
TO USE SAWAMURA IN A HIGHLY VOLATILE SITUATION LIKE THIS...
Y-YES, SIR!!!
YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE THE MOUND IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION...
CAN YOU GO IN RIGHT AWAY?
YOU'VE BEEN WARMING UP AND PREPARING THE WHOLE TIME RIGHT?

DESPITE THAT, THE PITCHING YOU SHOWED DURING THE GAME AGAINST THE THIRD YEARS...
...IS WHERE MY HOPES LIE.



2
FOCUS ON THE BATTER!
THE FIRST PITCH.
ONCE SAWAMURA THROWS IT, IT WILL BE CLEAR WHETHER OR NOT HE'S IN GOOD SHAPE.
REMEMBER, ONE AT A TIME! PITCH TO CONTACT!

Grrrr
YOU CAN MISS THE ZONE AS LONG AS YOU SWING YOUR ARM PROPERLY
THE BATTER IS TARGETING YOUR FIRST STRIKE.
Puf-wh
Fwh
I DARE YOU THROW TO THE INSIDE AGAINST ME, IF YOU CAN!

10
!
...TO ONE POINT...
FOCUSING ALL THE NERVES
RELAXING THE WHOLE BODY

...TO THE FINGER-TIPS!!!

STRIKE !!!
O-OUTSIDE AND LOW!!!
HONESTLY, I'M THRILLED!
NICE THROW, SAWA-MURA!
HAVING TO TAKE THE MOUND THIS URGENTLY, UNDER THE POURING RAIN..
WAY TO GO, SAWA-MURA!
PRESS 'IM, PRESS 'IM!
AND THE VERY FIRST PITCH IS LIKE THIS

..WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY..
smiley
IT'S TOO DAMN HARD-TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE CORRECT TIMING FOR A HIT..
TOKYO

FOUL!
AN OUTSIDE THROW AGAIN! A HIGH FLYING BALL TO LURE THE BATTER INTO HITTING!
WITH THIS, THE COUNT IS 2-2
OOOH
NICE THROW, SAWAMURA!
Fuh
BUT STAY FOCUSED!
WITH JUST 2 OUTSIDE PITCHES, HE TURNED THE COUNT AROUND...
YEAH... WHEN DID HE LEARN TO PITCH LIKE THAT ...?
AFTER THIS, HIS INSIDE THROWS WILL HAVE AN EVEN GREATER EFFECT

I have to wonder about that.
AND HIS ARM SWINGS JUST FINE EVEN IN THIS RAIN, HUH.
THIS KID SURE HAS GUTS.
JUST LOOK AT HIS PACE!
BUT CONTRARY TO THAT SILLY MUG, HE HAS NO WEAKNESSES!
OUTSIDE... WILL IT BE INSIDE NEXT? THIS TIME IT WILL BE, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S WHAT THIS GUY'S WORRIED ABOUT, THEN WE CAN CONSIDER OURSELVES LUCKY
BECAUSE IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE HERE BESIDES THROWING TO THE OUTSIDE...
TOKYO
TOKYO

JUST NOW, YOU YOURSELF
SHOWED PROOF TO ALL WHO ARE WATCHING THAT YOU AREN'T POWERLESS, EVEN NOW.
ATTACK

KEEP ATTACKING!
THE OUTSIDE!

18

THE BATTER IS STRUCK OUT LOOKING !!!
THOSE LOW OUTSIDE PITCHES RENDRED HIM UNABLE TO EVEN SWING!
S
B
O
ONE MORE...
JUST ONE MORE OUT!

CHAPTER 250

FANGS

2 OUTS! 2 OUTS!
GO, GO, TEITOU!
PUSH 'EM, PUSH 'EM, TEITOU!
SAWA-MURA!

THREE OUTS! CHANGE!
UGH...
ALL I COULD DO WAS TIP IT WITH MY BAT?
IT FLIES RIGHT INTO THE THIRD BASEMAN'S HANDS!

PITCHING TO THE OUTSIDE CORNER PROVED TO BE EFFECTIVE AGAINST THE TWO BATTERS FACED!
ALRIGHT!
4
18
NICE PITCHING!
THE GAMEFLOW WAS STARTING TO FAVOR TEITOU, BUT IT WAS PREVENTED WITH THIS PERFECT RELIEVING!
Fuh
1
HMPH SO HIS PITCHING ALSO HAS A GOOD BRISK PACE AND RHYTHM TO IT

GEEZ...
HE WAS AMAZING...
THAT ASIDE, HE DIDN'T THROW TO THE INSIDE!!! NOT A SINGLE PITCH!!!
11
I WONDER WHAT WAS THAT EXCITEMENT AND ANTICIPATION THAT I FELT WHEN EIJUN STEPPED ONTO THE MOUND
AND ENCOURAGING BUT HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S ABOUT TO PULL SOMETHING
("SWEATDROP")
18
Phew
YOU'RE LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON WHEN YOU'RE CALM AND COLLECTED, Y'KNOW!!!
SA—
WA—
MU—
RA—
NICE PITCHING, YOU LITTLE SHIT!

O—SHI
OSHI
OSHI!
UOO
——
SHI!
OSHI
OSHI!
SHUT UP!!! DON'T YELL IN THE DUGOUT!
OOOO
——
——!
NOW THEN! LET US LAUNCH A BIG COUNTER-ATTACK!
THE OPPONENTS SEEM TO BE VERY WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INSIDE PITCHES COMING.
ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAYBE IT WAS ANXIETY THAT I FELT ...?
GHO!
S-SORRY! I DID IT DESPITE MYSELF!
I HAD A LOT PENT UP!
DON'T GIMME THAT!

HIS PITCHES ARE IN GOOD CONDITION, SO IT MIGHT BE VIABLE TO LET SAWAMURA CONTINUE TO PITCH.
Delayed nervousness?
Nmu nmu mu...
Sawamura, nice pitching
ドキ
ドキ
TOK

BOTTOM OF THE SIXTH

HMMM THEY CAN'T FIND A FAULT IN MUKAI'S PITCHING ANYMORE...
HE HASN'T THROWN ANYTHING THAT LOOKED EVEN REMOTELY LIKE A BAD PITCH IN QUITE A WHILE
2 OUTS!
2 OUTS ----!

A SINGLE HIT WAS ALL THEY COULD GET OFF OF HIM, IT'S SAD
THEY GOTTA FIND A WAY TO COUNTER-ATTACK SOON, OR ELSE
1ST BATTER
KURAMOCHI
THE FACT THAT THEIR ACE GOT BENCHED
SPEAKS FOR ITSELF LOUD AND CLEAR
COME ON!!!
KURA-MOCHI!

...PROVING JUST WHO THE NO.1 PITCHER OF THIS GENERATION IS!!!
DANCE!
NOW!
T

SWING YOUR BAT ALL AROUND!
SHU!

PERSIS-
TENCE
WINS!
YEAH!
FOUR
BALLS!
You still swung your bat all around.
THEY'VE ADJUSTED THEMSELVES TO START SUCESSFULLY IGNORING LOW BREAKING BALLS, HUH
LIKE HELL, I'D LET YOU BEAT ME AGAIN AND AGAIN, BASTARD.
TAIYOU, 2 OUTS!

THAT'S WAY TOO MANY PITCHES PER BATTER, AND IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS FROM THE VERY FIRST INNING...
WHAT'S THE PITCH COUNT FOR THIS INNING?
19 PITCHES TO 3 BATTERS.
TEITO
KATAOKA-KUN.
PUTTING PRESSURE ON US THROUGH ALL THE TEXTBOOK WAYS, AIN'T YOU,
青葉
...HMPH.
THINK YOU'LL GET A CHANCE TO ATTACK BY MAKING ME THROW MORE PITCHES?
DON'T YOU UNDERESTIMATE ME.

CONTRARY TO THEIR PREVIOUS TACTICS, THIS BATTER WENT AFTER THE VERY FIRST PITCH!

THE BALL GOES OVER THE SHORT-STOP'S HEAD!
A SOLID HIT!
BALL TO THIRD!

TH-THIS GUY...
AGH...
HE SAW THE WAY THE LEFT FIELDER FIELDED THE BALL AND CONTINUED RUNNING WITH NO HESITATION AT ALL...
SAFE!
RUNNERS ON FIRST AND THIRD WITH 2 OUTS!

AND TEITOU IS NOW UP AGAINST THE CLEAN-UPS!
3
STARTING WITH THE 3RD BATTER, FIRST BASEMAN, MAEZONO-KUN.

RRRIGHT
WITH A SINGLE, THE SCORE WILL GET TIED!
AND IF IT'S AN EXTRA-BASE HIT, SEIDOU CAN EVEN TURN THE GAME AROUND IN ONE SWOOP!
CLANG
A POWER HITTER
THEY'RE IGNORING THE LOW PITCHES UNTIL THEY GET COMPLETELY CORNERED AND TARGET WEAK PITCHES ONLY
THEY'RE ALSO KEEPING INTENSE FOCUS ON THE BALL EVEN AS THEY ARE BEING CORNERED
BANG~
OH
YEAH., WHEN THE WHOLE TEAM STICKS TO SUCH TACTICS, IT'S BOUND TO PUT CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON THE PITCHER
3

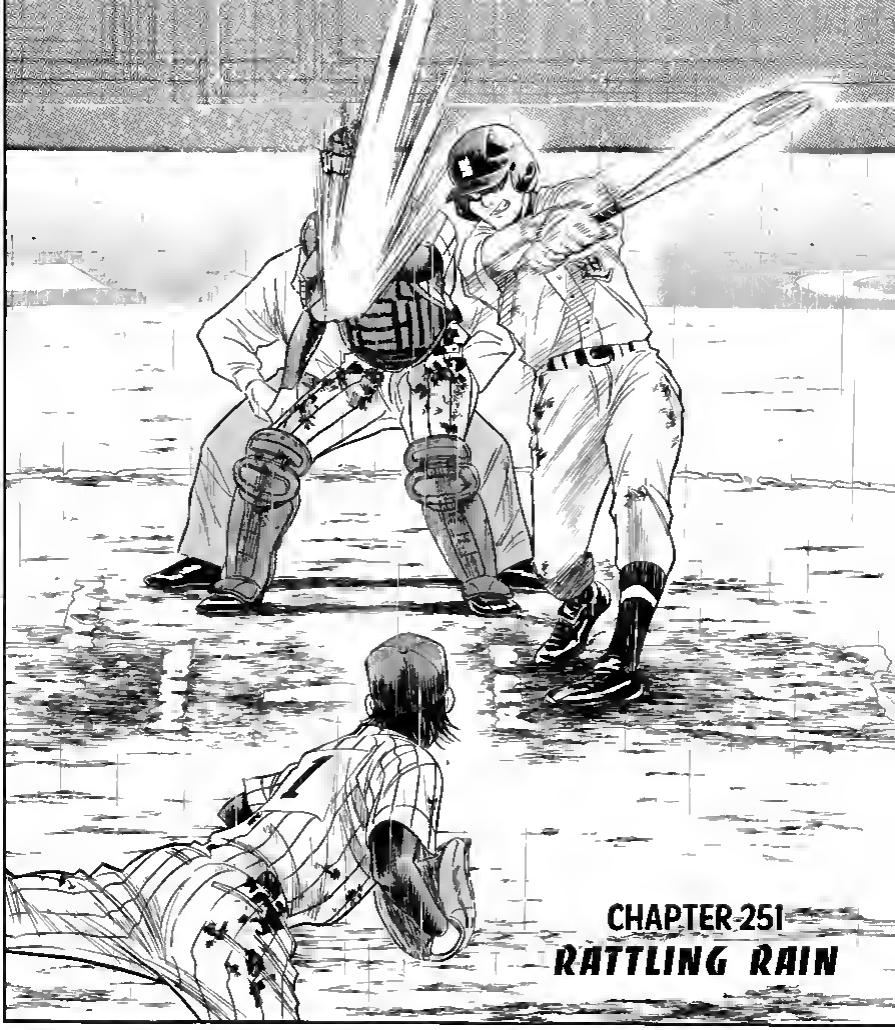
IF THE BALL GAINS EVEN A LITTLE HEIGHT,
THE RISK OF THEM SWOOPING DOWN ON IT THE SAME INSTANCE IS VERY HIGH...

JUST TRUST YOUR SWING...
ZONO...

ONLY HIGH PITCH-ES
FOUITLESS HOPE. THIS GUY WASN'T EVEN CLOSE TO GRAZING THE BALL SO FAR...
TEITO
HIT IT
ONLY THOSE THAT ARE ABOVE THE BELT...
IF YOU CAN!

ABOVE...
...THE BELT!!!

ダイヤのA
THE BELT!!!
ABOVE...


CHAPTER 251
RATTLING RAIN

AGGRESSIVELY GOING FOR A HIT ON THE FIRST PITCH,
AND POPPING UP A FLY AGAIN AS A RESULT!!!
OOH——

THE THIRD BASEMAN CATCHES IT!
THREE OUTS, CHANGE!
Taiyou!
Good!
Good!
Tetton!
Good!
Good!
YEAH... AND THAT'S PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THAT DANGER THAT MAEZONO-KUN FELL FOR THAT TRAP.
THE SLIGHTEST MISCALCULATION ON THE PITCHER'S PART WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN AN EXTRA-BASE HIT!
UNLIKE WITH THE OTHER BATTERS, WHO IGNORED LOW BALLS WAITING FOR A TARGET PITCH, AGAINST THIS BATTER...
THE PITCHER THREW A DELIBERATELY HIGH BALL TO *LURE* HIM INTO HITTING IT.
COURAGE TO WITHSTAND THIS PLIGHT WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE...
CONTROL REFINED ENOUGH TO MINUTELY MANAGE THE DEPTH TO WHICH EACH PITCH ENTERS THE STRIKE ZONE.

FINESSE YET BOLDNESS...
TOK
TO
TEIT
THIS UNLIKELY COMBINATION IS WHERE THE TRUE WORTH OF MUKAI TAIYOU'S PITCHING LIES.

SAWA-MURA!

Anywhere we want~

Start running~

Start running~

Start running~

Agh
Fuh
STRIKE! BATTER OUT!

2 OUTS!
STICKING TO THE OUTSIDE CORNER, HUH..
ALRIGHT! NICE PITCH!
SAWA-MURA AA!!!
All of them to the outside...
THIS BASTARD
THE LIKES OF US AIN'T EVEN WORTH WASTING HIS INSIDE PITCHES ON, IS THAT IT...?!

FIRST BASEMAN MAEZONO-KUN CATCHES THIS SIDEWAYS FLYING BALL!
THREE OUTS!

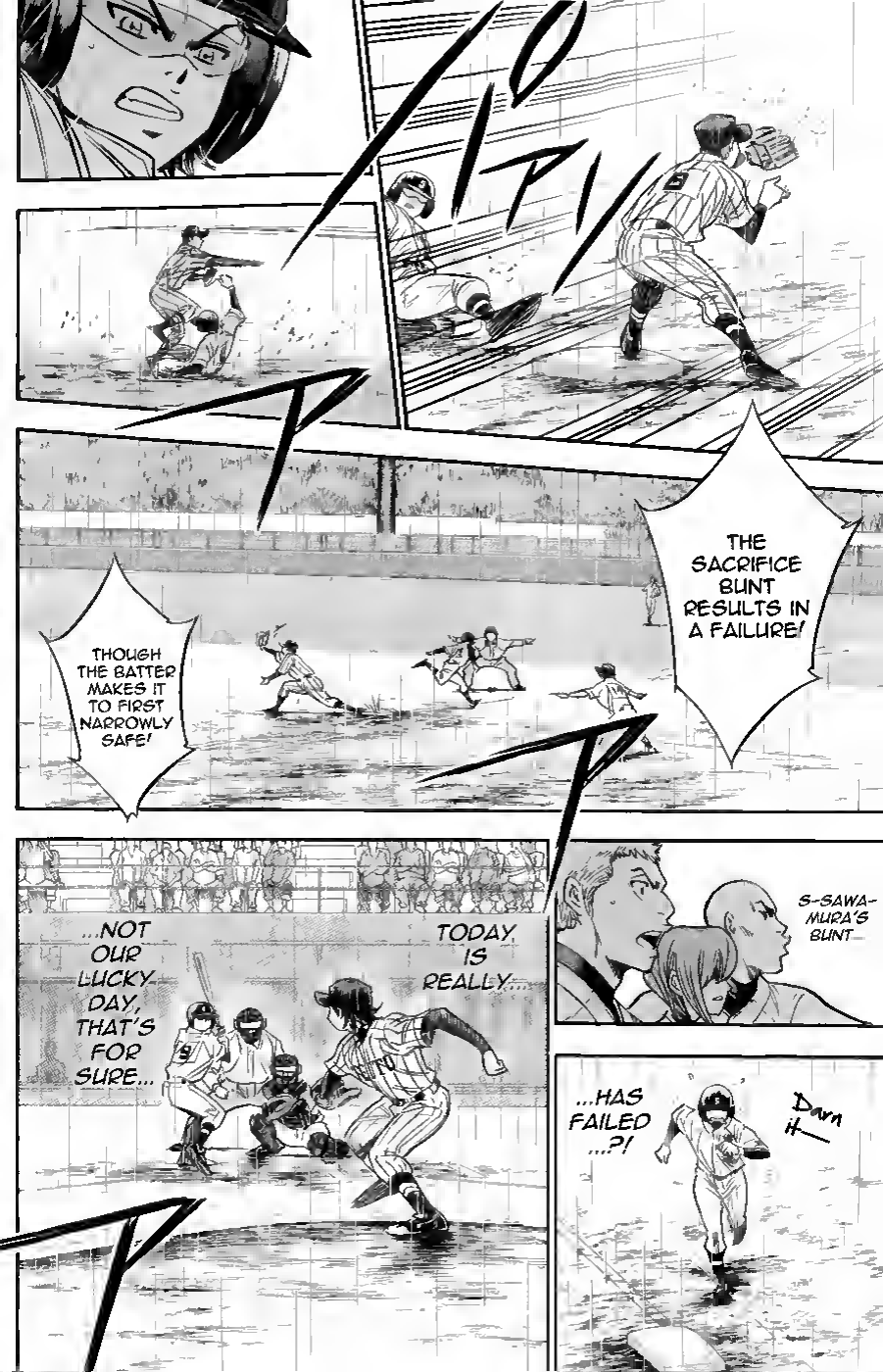
THE RELIEF PITCHER SAWAMURA, WHO TOOK THE MOUND IN THE PREVIOUS INNING,
ENDS THE SEVENTH INNING CLEANLY IN 3 BATTERS!
TEAM
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
473285961
UMPIRE

BOTTOM OF THE SEVENTH
Yes!
His second hit today!
THIS GUY AGAIN
GUYS WITH GOOD CONTROL ARE MY FAVORITES

BATTING 5TH, PITCHER, SAWAMURA-KUN.
Nfm
ALRIGHT, THEIR LEADOFF BATTER GOT ON BASE.
ODDLY ENOUGH, HE HIT DESPITE THERE NOT BEING ANY RUNNERS.
DOES IT MEAN HE GAINED AWARENESS OF HIS POSITION AS THE CAPTAIN NOW?
I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THEIR CHANCES THOUGH CONSIDERING THAT FUDUYA, WHO CAN HIT LONG IS BENCHED...
SEIDOU'S COACH DID NOT PUT IN A PINCH HITTER FOR SAWAMURA-KUN
YEAH... IT MEANS HE WANTS HIM ON THE MOUND IN THE NEXT INNING AS WELL.
THE RAIN IS GETTING HEAVIER AGAIN?
EXCUSE ME!

THEY SERIOUSLY NEED TO TAKE SOME POINTS IN THIS INNING
18
THERE IS STILL THE DANGER OF THE GAME GETTING CALLED AFTER 7 INNINGS DUE TO THE RAIN
PUFHEW—

ガキーン!!
カッ!!
!
CATCHER INUI WASTES NO TIME AND SENDS THE BALL TO SECOND!
THE MUDDY GROUND MADE THE BALL COME TO A STOP!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THE SACRIFICE BUNT RESULTS IN A FAILURE!
THOUGH THE BATTER MAKES IT TO FIRST NARROWLY SAFE!
S-SAWAMURA'S BUNT...
...HAS FAILED ...?!
Darn it
...NOT OUR LUCKY DAY, THAT'S FOR SURE...
TODAY IS REALLY...

THE BALL DROPS AT THE PITCHER'S FEET...!

DOUBLE PLAY!!!
THE STEEL WALL DEFENSE OF TEITOU HIGH BLOCKS THE WAY SECURELY!!!

THE SCORE GAP IS A MERE 1 RUN!
TEITO
BUT FOR SEIDOU, IT'S A LONG, LONG DISTANCE MARATHON!
WHAT I DON'T WANT HAPPENING THE MOST IS FOR THE GAME TO GET CALLED RAINOUT
BOTH TEAMS ARE SO HIGH LEVEL~~~
TEITOU'S DEFENSE IS PRETTY SICK
EVEN IN THIS RAIN, THEY HARDLY MADE ANY MISTAKES, NO?

NO WAY
WE WON'T LET IT END LIKE THIS!
WE'LL LET IT END HERE.
ALRIGHT !!!

CHAPTER 252
WHERE I STAND

THE LEADOFF BATTER WAS RETIRED ON A FLY TO RIGHT FIELD!
AND NOW, THE NEXT BATTER, NUMBER 3 IN THE LINEUP, IS OUT ON A GROUNDER TO SECOND!

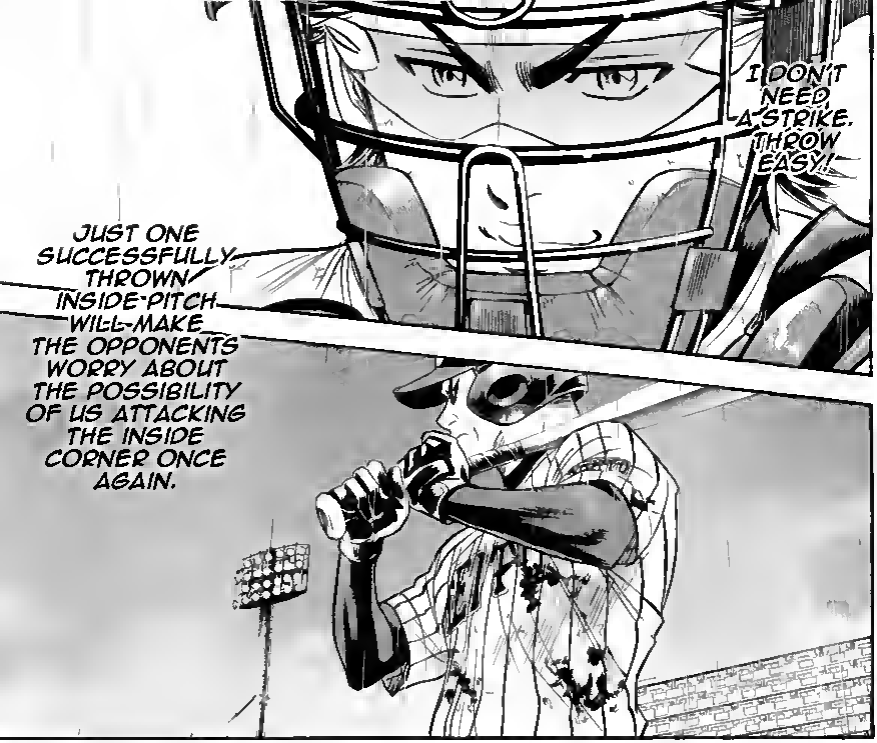
SAWAMURA, TO WHOM THE MOUND IS ENTRUSTED, CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD PITCHING AND HAS YET TO SUFFER A HIT!
2 OUTS!
2 OUTS!
STILL FOCUSING SOLELY ON THE OUTSIDE CORNER, ISN'T HE...
HMMM. HIS PITCHES DON'T LOOK ALL THAT FAST, BUT, UH—
...MUST BE A TASK HE WAS CHALLENGED WITH DURING THE SUMMER BREAK.
THEY PROBABLY BREAK AT THE PLATE OR SOMETHING, RIGHT?

BATTING 4TH, CATCHER, INUI-KUN.
IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT'S BOTHERING ME...
IS THAT HE HASN'T THROWN A SINGLE INSIDE PITCH IN THIS GAME...

STRIKE!
TOKYO

THE COUNT IS 2-1!
IT FEELS SO FAR AWAY..
AND THE TIMING IS HARD TO FIGURE OUT.
THE PITCHER DOESN'T CHANGE HIS TACTICS, FOCUSING ON THE OUTSIDE CORNER EVEN NOW!
TO BE EXPECTED, I GUESS, BUT IT'S RETIRING THIS HITTER WITH JUST OUTSIDE PITCHES REALLY IS GONNA BE DIFFICULT.

M-MIYUKI
ASKED FOR AN INSIDE PITCH..


I DON'T NEED A STRIKE. THROW EASY!
JUST ONE SUCCESSFULLY THROWN INSIDE-PITCH WILL MAKE THE OPPONENTS WORRY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF US ATTACKING THE INSIDE CORNER ONCE AGAIN.

ドクン
ドクン

THE SAME MOTION AS HOW I THREW EARLIER...
GO! SAWA-MURA!
FOCUSING MY POWER ONLY THE MOMENT
WHEN I RELEASE THE BALL...
DRIVE IT IN!

FROM THE FINGER-TIPS!
TO THE INSIDE!!!

TEITO

IT SAILS OVER THE RIGHT FIELDER!
A DOUBLE BY INUI-KUN, WHO MAKES IT TO SECOND!
TEITO

AS EXPECTED OF TEITOU'S FOURTH BATTER!
HE DIDN'T LET THE WEAK PITCH PASS!
青道
TOK!
THE BALL DIDN'T GO TO WHERE THE CATCHER WANTED IT
INU!!
INU!!
INU!!
SPOILING A GOOD MOMENT WITH A BAD BALL
THAT FAILED THROW WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN INSIDE PITCH IT SEEMS

RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE.
K-Kawakami-
I RUSHED THINGS WITH THAT PITCH...
18
EIJUN-KUN
Fuh
SAWA-MURA...

SAWAMURA! JUST GET OVER IT AND--
WE'VE ALREADY GOT 2 OUTS,
EVERY-BODY!
WE MAY BE FACING A CRISIS,
BUT LET US SORT IT OUT WITHOUT PANICKING!!!

WE GOT HIT! IT HAPPENS!
AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK ALL THE FIELDERS
TO MUSTER THE STRENGTH TO GET OVER IT SOMEHOW!!!
What was that?
TEI TO
NO, NO, NO, NO
DAK-AMURA!
...THIS IS MY CURRENT ABILITY.
HE WENT AND SAID EVERYTHING WE WANTED TO SAY!!!
WHY D'YOU LOOK SO MAD, ANY-WAYZ!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO GET OVER IT!!!

THIS IS WHERE I STAND AT THE MOMENT.
Fuh
THINGS I DON'T HAVE, I DON'T HAVE!
NO USE GETTING FLUSTERED OVER IT NOW!

I CAN ONLY FIGHT
WITH THE THINGS I'VE GOT.
smiley
MY, MY WHAT AN AMAZINGLY QUICK RECOVERY, OR MAYBE...
EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG RESOLVE AND STUPIDITY...

WE WON'T LET THAT ONE PITCH
GO TO WASTE!

ダイヤのA
THE BALL IS CAUGHT!
ALRIGHT!
A POWERFUL HIT RESULTS IN A FLY TO CENTER FIELD!
OOSHI!
DESPITE THEIR CLEANUPS' TURN AT BAT, TEITOU GETS NO RUNS IN THIS INNING!
Grrrr

FIRST YEAR SAWAMURA RELENTLESSLY ATTACKED THE OUTSIDE CORNER, ALLOWING A SINGLE LONG HIT IN THE 8TH INNING,
ONLY TO MARVEOUSLY OVERCOME THE CRISIS RIGHT AFTER!
TOKYO
TALK ABOUT OVER-DOING IT!
Spark
Spark
NICE PITCHING YOU LITTLE!
WITH HAVING ONLY OUTSIDE PITCHES AT HIS DISPOSAL, HE DID GREAT
THIS IS PROBABLY IT FOR HIS TURN TODAY

3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
0 0 0 1 0 0
0 0 0 0 0
THE SCORE GAP REMAINS UNCHANGED AT 1 RUN, AND 2 INNINGS ARE LEFT.
OUR MATCH IS FINALLY ENTERING ITS FINAL STAGE!
CHAPTER 253
I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP

NICE PITCHING, SAWAMURA.
YOU'VE FULFILLED YOUR DUTY!
THANK YOU, SIR!
THIS IS MERELY WHAT THE ONE KNOWN AS THE SUNNY MAN WHOSE PRESENCE ALONE MAKES THE SKIES CLEAR IS SUPPOS--
NO, NO, NO, NO THE SKIES ARE NOT CLEARING
IT'S STILL POURING DOWN
WE STILL HAVE 2 INNINGS.
I TRUST ALL OF YOU ARE AWARE OF WHAT YOU NEED TO DO.
KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING TILL NOW, FIGHT BACK AND PERSEVERE

EITHER WE RUN OUT OF STAMINA FIRST
OR THE OPPONENTS THROW IN THE TOWEL ...
DON'T PASS UP EVEN THE SMALLEST OF CRACKS IN THEIR DEFENSES!
YES SIR!

LET'S START WITH GETTING BACK 1 RUN!
THE CONDITION OF THE FIELD IS AS MUCH A CAUSE FOR CONCERN TO OUR OPPONENTS AS IT IS TO US.
IN ANY CASE, GROUNDERS ARE THE WAY TO GO.
AND TURN IT AROUND FROM THERE!
YEAH!
BUT TAKING HIS PITCH COUNT INTO ACCOUNT, I'LL NEED TO SUB OUT TAIYOU SOON!
WE'RE UP ONLY 1 RUN.
EXCEED-ED 120
WHAT'S TAIYOU'S PITCH COUNT?
TELL MIYAKAWA TO GO WARM UP!

STILL, FOR NOW, I'LL LEAVE IT TO TAIYOU.
TOKYO
6 OUTS LEFT THAT WE NEED TO TAKE
IT'S HARD ON YOU, I KNOW, BUT WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO ATTACK WITH EVEN MORE CARE THEN BEFORE...
STRUGGLING IN THIS KIND OF CLOSE FIGHT IS WHAT POLISHES AN ACE...
WE NEED TAIYOU TO SHED THE OUTER LAYER SOON...

I JUST GET MY BEST KICKS FROM MAKING BATTERS SWING ON BALLS.
PITCH COUNT DOESN'T MATTER, INUI-SAN...
7TH BATTER
HIGASA
AGH.. THROWING ONLY TO HARD-TO-HIT SPOTS

HE'S STILL ABLE TO LOCATE HIS PITCHES AT THE CORNERS OF THE STRIKE ZONE WITH PERFECT PRECISION, EVEN AFTER 8 INNINGS
1 OUT!
TEITO
IT JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW CONFIDENT HE IS IN HIS PITCHING STYLE
1 OUT!

MAKING BATTERS SWING ON BALLS IS FINE, BUT WHEN THEY ADJUST ENOUGH TO TELL BALLS FROM STRIKES, HE FINDS HIMSELF IN A PRECARIOUS SITUATION, HAVING TO BATTLE THEM TILL THE COUNT IS FULL MORE OFTEN THAN NOT.
BUT I WOULD BE LYING IF I SAID THAT IT DOESN'T LOOK TO ME LIKE HE OBSSESSES OVER HIS STYLE TOO MUCH.
FIGHTING IN THE ZONE MORE AND GETTING OUTS BY LETTING BATTERS HIT WOULD ALSO HELP REDUCE HIS PITCH COUNT.
8TH BATTER
ASOU

NO MATTER HOW PERFECTLY HE'S BEEN HOLDING THEM BACK TILL NOW,
BASEBALL IS A SPORT WHERE A SINGLE PITCH CAN CHANGE THE SITUATION COMPLETELY.
ON WHOM WILL LADY LUCK SMILE IN THE END ...?

THE PITCHER MADE THE BATTER SWING AGAIN!
STRUCK OUT SWINGING!
TWO OF SEIDOU'S BATTERS ARE RETIRED IN NO TIME IN THIS INNING!
BUT THEY CAN'T LET IT END EASILY IF THEY WANT TO CONNECT TO THEIR DEFENSE AND OFFENSE IN THE NINTH INNING...!
Feels so good

YOU STAY OUT OF THIS!!!
AND IF IT'S LIKE THIS, THEN DO THIS!
IF IT FLIES LIKE THIS, THIS IS WHAT YOU GOTTA DO!
9TH BATTER, TOUJOU-KUN IS UP TO BAT.
TOUJOU!
TOUJOU! LIKE THIS!!!
WE WON'T LET IT END WITH US TAKING A BEATING...

STRIKE!
A CROSS-FIRE FROM A SIDE-ARMER, EH
WITH THAT ANGLE, YOU CAN'T HOPE TO PUT YOUR BAT ON IT...
IT'S THE EIGHTH INNING ALREADY, BUT HIS PITCHES ARE AS SHARP AS IN THE BEGINNING...
That wasn't half-bad!
WHAT KIND OF TRAINING TEITOU PUT HIM THROUGH, DAMMIT...

LET'S DO THIS!
YOU'RE TOUJOU, THE ACE OF MATSUKATA SENIOR, RIGHT?
WHY ARE YOU A FIELDER?
THESE TWO SEEM TO HAVE HAD A FIERCE COMPETITION WITH EACH OTHER AS THE ACES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAMS
AND NOW ONE OF THEM IS ALREADY THE ACE FOR THE POWERHOUSE, TEITOU
TOUJOU-KUN IS PROBABLY DRIVEN BY THE STRONG DESIRE NOT TO LOSE NO MATTER WHAT RIGHT NOW...
AND HERE I THOUGHT WE'D SQUARE OFF IN HIGH SCHOOL AGAIN AS PITCHERS...
BUT YOU STOOD ME UP...
HOW COULD YOU...

...LET THE TWO OUTSIDERS STEAL THE MOUND FROM YOU!!!

O-ONE-HANDED-LY...
IT GOES PAST SECOND ...!

AAAAND HITS THE GROUND!
ALRIGHT
FIRST YEAR TOUJOU PERSEVERES AND GETS ON BASE IN A 2 OUTS SITUATION!
YEAH!
A-ALL ACCORDING TO MY ADVICE
WHAT STURDY LEGS AND HIPS... THAT'S A FORMER PITCHER FOR YOU.

I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP...
...ON THIS GAME! OR ON BEING A PITCHER!!!
AND NOW, IT'S BACK TO THE TOP BATTERS!
Fuh
WHAT KIND OF ATTACKS WILL THEY SHOW TO CONNECT THE LINEUP?
Pisses me off
AH, RIGHT EVEN BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD HIT MY WINNING SHOT
2

APPEARANCES BE DAMN.
MY DUTY IS TO CONNECT TO THE NEXT BATTER, NO MATTER WHAT.
1

CHAPTER 254
DISCOURSE ON BATTLE

FIRST PITCH ...!
ヒュオ
AGGRESSIVE ATTEMPT TO HIT RESULTS IN A FOUL!

IT'S THE BOTTOM OF THE 8TH, 2 OUTS, RUNNER ON FIRST.
CAN NUMBER 1, KURAMOCHI, BOOST HIS TEAM'S CHANCES?
Let's go!
Let's go!
Let's go!

THE COUNT IS 1-1.
DON'T JUST STRIKE POSES. GO AHEAD! I DARE YOU TO TRY AND RUN ON MY WATCH!
THE THIRD PITCH ...

SAFETY BUNT!
IN THE LIGHT OF 2 OUTS, WHAT UNLIKELY DEVELOPMENT!

THIRD BASEMAN BABAZONO DIDN'T EXPECT IT, FALLING FOR THE FEINT!
WHAT IS FASTER?!
KURAMOCHI'S LEGS OR THE STEEL WALL DEFENSE?!
NHA!
TOK

AHHH-- THE RETURN THROW GOES ERRANT!
THE STEEL DEFENSE MAKES A MISTAKE!
SEIDOH!
SEIDOH!
YEAH

THE RUNNERS MADE IT TO THE NEXT BASE!
THE NEXT TO TRY AND ADVANCE THE SECOND BASE RUNNER TO THIRD IS...
THE 2ND BATTER, AS WELL AS SECOND BASEMAN, KOMINATO-KUN!
HARU-CCHI!!!
TARGET HIS PITCH AND GO FOR IT FULL THROTTLE!
THOSE BANGS HIDE SHARP OBSERVANT EYES!
青道

THE NEXT TO TAKE THE BOX IS KOMINATO-KUN, A VERY GOOD HITTER
AND THE SECOND BASE RUNNER IS THE FAST-LEGGED KURAMOCHI-KUN
IF KOMINATO-KUN HITS A LONG ONE, A TURNAROUND WILL BE POSSIBLE
AND NOW, THE GAME RESUMES.
What's even that
...for that reason
ALRIGHT!

SO THEY'RE GOING WITH THE LOADING BASES PLAN, HUH.
SO BU TANTY MISSING THE ZONE WITH THOSE THROWS AT THAT
WITH FULL BASES, DEFENDING WILL BE SIMPLER FOR THEM
THEY'RE AVOIDING A FIGHT WITH THAT BATTER, HUH.

IS HE AN IDIOT OR SOME-THING?
MGUGU... CONTRARY TO HIS APPEARANCE, HARUCCHI'S A DEMON, THROUGH AND THROUGH!
THE PITCHER REALIZED IT AND GOT SCARED!
THIS IS PART OF OUR PLAN, OBVIOUSLY!
BALL!
CONSIDERING THAT THE NEXT BATTER IS
THEY WANT TO GET THE THIRD OUT OFF THE BATTER THEY CAN RETIRE FOR CERTAIN
A NATURAL CHOICE FOR THE BATTERY, I GUESS..

...THIRD BATTER, MAEZONO-KUN, WHO HAS YET TO LAND A SINGLE HIT TODAY.
HE NEVER HITS ANYTHING
THE BASES ARE NOW LOADED!
BALL FOUR!

LET IT ROLL! IT WILL WORK OUT SOMEHOW IF YOU JUST MAKE THE BALL ROLL!
THEY WILL STILL HAVE THEIR ATTACK IN THE BOTTOM OF THE NINTH, BUT
THEY BETTER MAKE SOMETHING OF THE CHANCE THEY HAVE RIGHT NOW
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU HERE, MAEZONO!
TIME TO PUT A CLEAN END TO THEM!
WELL THEN...
IN YOUR PREVIOUS AT-BATS, YOUR SWING WASN'T BAD!
DON'T HESITATE, MAEZONO.

WAIT AND WATCH THE BALL TILL IT REACHES YOUR CHEST, THEN HIT IT STRONGLY!
STICK TO THIS AND MAKE IT WORK THIS TIME!
nod
IF I WAS HIS CATCHER,
A BATTER NOT SWINGING ON THOSE LOW BALLS WOULD BE THE MOST UNPLEASANT THING TO ME, I THINK.
THIS IS SUCH A SWEET OPPORTUNITY YOU'VE GOT THERE, BASTARD!
GO AND BECOME A HERO!

YOU WON'T HIT A PITCH ON AN UNHITTABLE COURSE, NO MATTER HOW YOU TRY!
SO JUST MAKE SURE YOU PUT YOUR BAT ONLY TO WHAT YOU ACTUALLY CAN HIT, AND DO IT THE BEST YOU CAN!
IN OUR MATCH, GREATLY INFLUENCED BY THE WEATHER, BOTH TEAMS ARE STRONG
BUT SO FAR, NEITHER CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE 1 RUN DIFFERENCE.

IT'S THE BOTTOM OF THE EIGHTH, 2 OUTS, BASES LOADED,
AND WE HAVE REACHED THE CLIMAX OF THE ENDSTAGE!

CAN MAEZONO, WHO PACKS QUITE A PUNCH, RETURN THE BLOW?
OR WILL TEITOU'S MUKAI RECORD THE PROUD ZERO ON THE SCOREBOARD AGAIN IN THIS INNING?
SLAM IT WITH...
BANG!
LET'S DO IT!
OH
IT'S THE FIRST PITCH, AND ALL OF US ARE WATCHING IT INTENTLY ...!

A SCREW-BALL RIGHT ON THE FIRST PITCH!
BALL!
THAT WAS A BALL, HUH...?
THE CATCHER COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR A PITCH LIKE THAT IF HE DIDN'T HAVE COMPLETE TRUST IN MUKAI'S CONTROL
HE DID A GOOD JOB RECOGNIZING IT AS A BALL IT WAS
I WON'T LET YOU TO EVEN TIP THE BALL WITH YOUR BAT
THEN USE IT FAR AND WIDE, TAIYOU!
THE STRIKE ZONE IS LIMITLESS TO YOU, RIGHT?
WAITING... TILL THE BALL REACHES MY CHEST... THEN HITTING... HITTING STRONGLY...
SEIKYO

HIT IT IF YOU CAN!!!
I'LL SLAP IT!!!

BOTTOM OF THE EIGHTH: 2 OUTS, BASES LOADED

CHAPTER 255
PLAN

THE SECOND PITCH IS A SLIDER.
IT JUST BARELY NIBBLED AT THE OUTSIDE CORNER OF THE ZONE, STRIKE!
IT'S OK, IT'S OK! JUST TARGET HIS PITCH!
THE BATTER DIDN'T CATCH ON THAT!
NICE THROW, TAIYOU!
THE COUNT IS 1-1. THE THIRD PITCH IS...

A FAST-BALL!

NICE SWING!
YOU'RE MAKING CONTACT! MAKING CONTACT!
NICE THROW, TAIYOU!
OK!!
YEAH MAEZONO-KUN HAS STARTED SWINGING,
RESOLUTELY AT THAT.
OUTSIDE AND LOW... HE IS TARGETING FASTBALLS, ISN'T HE!
THE COUNT IS 2-1.
THE TEITOU BATTERY HAS THE BATTER CORNERED!

ARE THEY GOING FOR THE KILL NOW?
THE FOURTH PITCH ---
A LOW BALL. IT'S COMING.

BALL !!!
THE BATTER DID GREAT SEEING THROUGH IT AND STAYING HIS BAT!
YOU CAN SEE THEM, YOU CAN SEE THEM!
GREAT CHOICE!
ONE THING'S FOR SURE THE BATTERY DOESN'T WANT TO DRAG THIS DUEL OUT TILL THE COUNT IS FULL.
STICKING EXCUSIVELY TO THE OUTSIDE WITH THOSE PITCHES, EH
THE COUNT IS STILL ONLY 2-2
WHAT'S HE GOING TO THROW NEXT?

I WILL END IT
WITH THIS!

ガッ!!

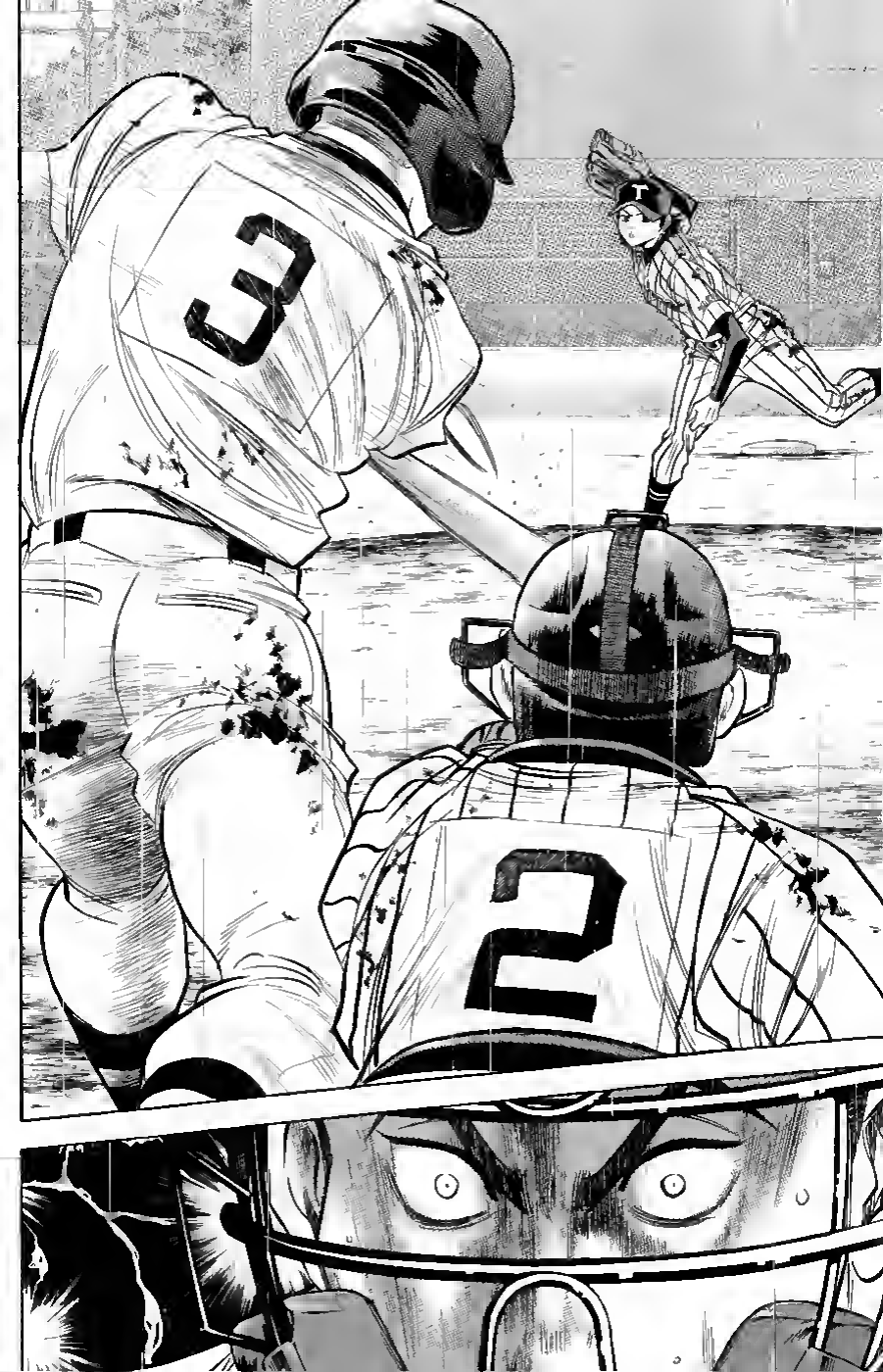
H-HE TIPED IT!
PUPHEW
A NARROW FOUL!
PUPHEW
THAT WAS DANGER-OUS~~~!
THAT PITCH... IT WAS BARELY IN THE ZONE
HE WOULDA BEEN OUT FOR SURE HAD HE NOT REACHED IT WITH HIS BAT
TCH

STOP BEING SO OBSTI-NATE,
DAMN SMALL FRY!
HAAH ——
WATCHING THIS UNFOLD IS QUITE NERVE-WRECKING!
THE BATTERY HOPED THEY WOULD END IT WITH THE PITCH THEY THREW JUST NOW, I GUESS...
BUT... THERE IS A RISK THAT A TIGHT INSIDE ATTACK WILL RESULT IN A DEAD BALL...
THE COUNT IS 2-2, AND THEY WERE ONLY THROWING TO THE OUTSIDE SO FAR
NOW THAT THEY'RE FORCED TO THROW MORE, THEY WOULD WANT TO THROW ONCE TO THE INSIDE RIGHT ABOUT NOW...

WITHOUT A GOOD MEASURE OF RESOLVE AND TRUST...
THIS IS NOT A PITCH THE CATCHER CAN ASK FOR
W-WITH NO HESITATION AT ALL...
WE'LL GO WITH A PITCH THAT WILL RESULT IN A FOUL EVEN IF HIT.

WE'LL FINISH HIM OFF WITH AN OUTSIDE THROW.
NOD
WE'LL MAKE IT A WASTE PITCH, AND AFTER THAT,
EH?
WHAT A TERRIFYING BATTERY.
...
WORDLESS UNDER-STANDING IN ALL ITS GLORY.
THOSE TWO ARE SHARING THE SAME IMAGE OF HOW TO GET THIS BATTER OUT!
2

JUST STICK TO YOUR SWING!
WAIT ON IT, THEN STRONGLY
DON'T HESITATE!
IT'LL BE OVER WITH MY NEXT PITCH...
HMPH NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU PERSIST,
HIT STRONGLY
THE CONCLUSION OF THIS DUEL!
I CAN SEE IT!



HUH?!

THIS WASN'T MEANT FOR DUELING WITH YOU, IT'S A WASTE O---
WAIT HERE A... SEC...
IT'LL GO INTO THE FOUL TERRITORY...
IT'S GONNA BE OK!

IT DROPS JUST THIS SHY FROM THE LEFT FOUL LINE !!!
FAIR !!!

YEAH!
THE THIRD BASE RUNNER COMES HOME,
FOLLOWED BY THE SECOND BASE RUNNER!
O O O!
STRONG DETERMINATION TO HIT FROM THE CENTER TO THE RIGHT. IT'S BECAUSE HE HAD IT THAT HE MANAGED TO AVOID FOULING THAT PITCH
H-HOW SPLENDIDLY HE HANDLED A PITCH THROWN TO SUCH A DIFFICULT PART OF THE INSIDE CORNER!
IT'S TAKING TIME TO FIELD THE BALL AFTER IT BOUNCED OFF THE OUTFIELD WALL,
STILL...
UWOOO!
AND THE FIRST BASE RUNNER USES THE DELAY TO TRY AND REACH THE HOME PLATE AS WELL!
FOR MUKAI-KUN, THAT WAS A WEAK COURSE

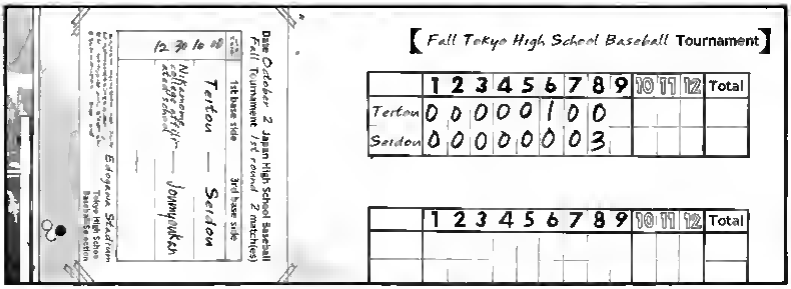
WHAT A POWERFUL COMEBACK!
THE RBI BY THIRD BATTER, MAEZONO, BRINGS ALL THE RUNNERS HOME AT ONCE ALONG WITH A DRAMATICAL TURNAROUND!
INSPIRED, HE IS HEADING TO THIRD--

BUT... CAN'T REACH IT.
3 OUTS, CHANGE!
TOO EXCITED FOR YOUR OWN GOOD!
YOU EVEN GOT LEG CRAMPS FROM IT!
SORRY.
STILL, 3 RUNS AT ONCE IN THIS INNING!
THE LONG-AWAITED POINTS ARE PROUDLY DISPLAYED ON THE SCOREBOARD!

T-TAIYOU...
ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR TEITOU'S ACE, MUKAI,
ALL OF HIS GOOD PITCHING TILL NOW WENT DOWN THE DRAIN
BECAUSE OF ONE REGRETFUL THROW!
WHAT'S LOST IS LOST!
WHATCHA DOING HANGING YOUR HEADS?!
TEITO
I-IN JUST ONE PITCH, THEY SWITCHED PLACES, AND THE HUNTERS BECAME THE HUNTED...

BUT ONLY PROVIDED THE INSIDE ATTACK WAS TO BE VERY TIGHT...!
THE PLAN WAS FLAWLESS...
YEAH... THAT'S HOW BASEBALL WORKS!
ON THE CAP. ONE PITCH
BECAUSE HE WAS ALREADY THINKING AHEAD, ABOUT THE OUTSIDE PITCH HE WANTED TO FINISH THE BATTER WITH...?
DID HE RELAX HIS GUARD ON IT JUST A LITTLE

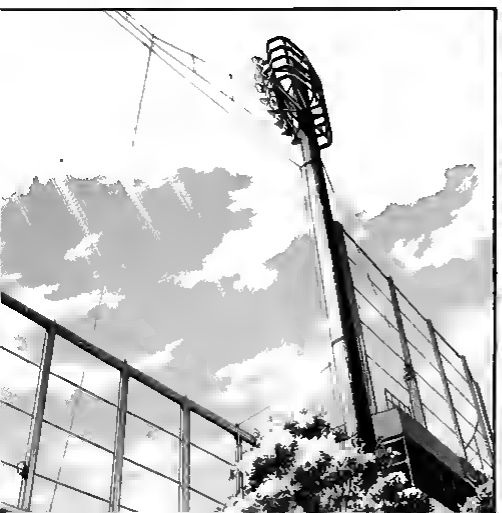
ダイヤのA

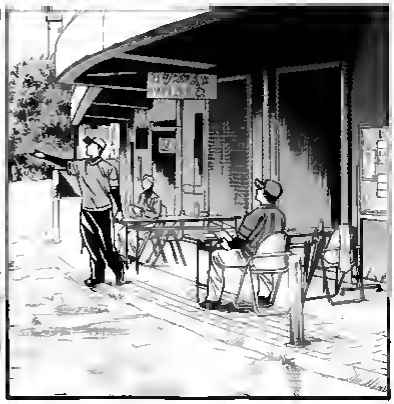


【Fall Tokyo High School Baseball Tournament】

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Tertou	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0					
Seidou	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total





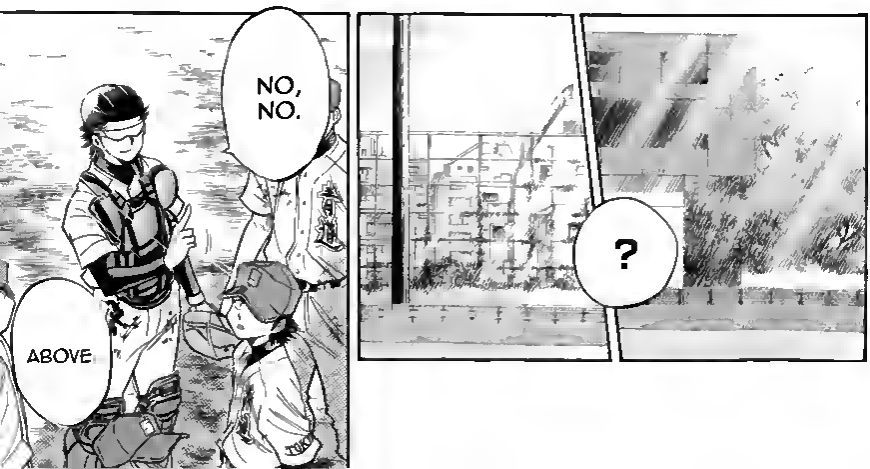
TOKYO
Fwh!

THE DEFENSE MAKES A MISTAKE!!!
CHAPTER 256
SCENERY
CLOSER KAWAKAMI, WHO TOOK THE MOUND IN THE LAST INNING,
CAN'T SEEM TO TAKE THE THIRD OUT!
TIMEOUT PLEASE

5 6 7 8 9 10
1 0 0 1
0 3
UMPIRE
AND NOW IT'S 2 OUTS, BASES LOADED.
TEITOU HIGH TOOK 1 RUN BACK,
THIS IS SEIDOU HIGH'S BIGGEST TRIAL ON THEIR WAY TO VICTORY, WHICH IS RIGHT BEFORE THEIR EYES!
Kamu-kamu!!
CALM DOWN AND DO IT!
2 OUTS! 2 OUTS ~~~!

IT'S OK TO LET 'EM HIT TO NEAR'Y PLACES, Y'KNOW.
FIRST, CALM DOWN A LITTLE!
AND DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU!
IT'S ALRIGHT! YOUR PITCHES ARE GOOD!
SO LET'S FIGHT IN THE ZONE!
HIS EXPRES-. SION SURE IS STIFF. AT THIS RATE, THE MOMEN-TUM

.....
NORI... BEHIND YOU.
OKYO
2
青道
青道


NO, NO.
ABOVE
?

SEE?
WE WERE SO BUSY GETTING FLUSTERED THAT WE EVEN FAILED TO NOTICE THIS SCENERY.

LET'S STICK TO OUR STYLE, MAKE OUR PLAYS WORK
AND SEIZE IT!
DON'T FALL BACK ON THE DEFEN-SIVE!
FIND IT IN YOUR-SELF TO ATTACK!
THE LOOK IN HIS EYES...

THE VICTORY!

TCH.
EITO
SHORTSTOP KURAMOCHI GOES HIMSELF TO PROTECT THE BASE!
AT THE END, THEY MADE THE WEATHER THEIR ALLY, HUH...
GAME SET !!!

2-3,
A MERE 1 RUN DIFFERENCE
IN THIS HEATED PITCHING CLASH BETWEEN TWO STRONG SCHOOLS OF EAST AND WEST!
SFX: APPLAUSE
THANK YOU!
AND IT'S SEIDOU HIGH THAT COMES OUT ON TOP IN THIS FIERCE MATCH!

TEITOU HIGH GAVE CHASE BUT FAILED TO CATCH UP.
THE SCHOOL THAT FOUGHT AT THIS SUMMER'S KOUSHIEN IS KNOCKED OUT IN THE FIRST ROUND!
T
TEITO
OUR OFF-SEASON WILL BE A LONG ONE THIS TIME.
I NEVER MEANT TO LET MY GUARD DOWN
NOT WITH THAT PITCH EITHER.

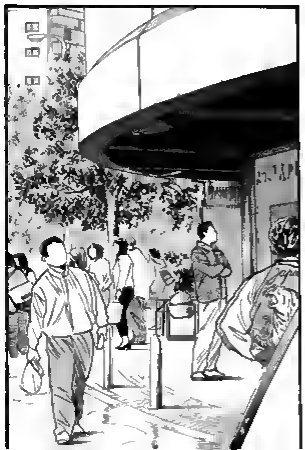
ON POLISHING OUR SKILLS,
IF WE WORK ON ALL THE THINGS WE NEED TO WORK ON, THAT IS
NO, IT WILL BE OVER IN A FLASH
ON GAINING POWER NECESSARY TO SHUT THE OPPONENTS OUT,
ON COMING UP WITH TACTICS TO PUT BATTERS INTO THE PALM OF OUR HAND...
2
I WILL HAVE YOU STICK WITH ME THROUGH ALL OF THEM
SURE... AFTER ALL, ALL I HAVE LEFT IS ONE SUMMER, NOW

ALSO, THAT PITCHER SWITCH IN THE SIXTH INNING
I WAS SHOCKED WHEN FURUYA GOT BENCHED
Yeah—
NO
NO
DID YOU THINK HE'D HIT?
NO WAY (LOL)
SO IN THE END, IT WAS THIRD BATTER, MAEZONO, WHO SCORED THE DECISIVE RUNS, EH
ザワ
BUT BOTH SAWAMURA AND MAEZONO JUSTIFIED THE COACH'S TRUST IN THEM.
TODAY, COACH KATAOKA'S DIRECTIONS WERE RIGHT ON THE MARK WEREN'T THEY?
青
……
ザワ
I CAN'T SAY THAT THEIR BATTING LINEUP HAS FULLY COME TOGETHER YET,
BUT THIS WIN IS SURE TO GIVE THEM MOMENTUM FOR THE NEXT ROUND.
ザワ

I'M TALKING ABOUT OUR HIGH SCHOOL CHOICE.
HM...? AH, YEAH, IT IS TEITOU WAS FIGHTING TOOTH AND NAIL TILL THE LAST MOMENT, BUT...
IT'S DECIDED, THEN.
LET'S GO TO SEIDOU.
EH?
MAKING LIFE DEFINING DECISIONS JUST LIKE THAT, ON A WHIM?!
EARLIER, ON A WHIM, I DECIDED... WE'D ENROLL INTO THE SCHOOL THAT WOULD WIN THIS GAME.
...YUP, ON A WHIM.

BECAUSE SEIDOU HAS TWO INTERESTING PITCHERS...
BUT IT WORKED OUT JUST FINE, I THINK.
KOU-SHUU...

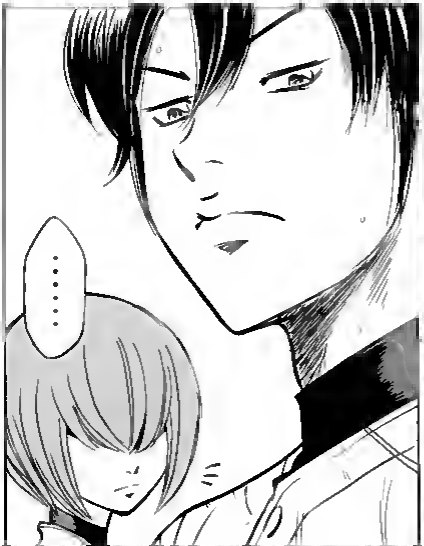
FALL TOKYO METROPOLIS HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TOURNAMENT
ROUND 1
TEITOU (EAST TOKYO) - SEIDOU (WEST TOKYO)
2 - 3
I COULD'VE HAD EVEN MORE FUN IF YOU'D LET ME IN ON THIS!
SAY IT OUTLOUD WHEN YOU COME UP WITH THESE SORTS OF IDEAS!



NO, I'M NOT KIDDING IT WAS MAEZONO, OF ALL PEOPLE—
YES— THAT'S RIGHT, SEIDOU DID—
3 RUNS AT ONCE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE EIGHTH

TO RAISE AN ACE, FIRST YOU GOTTA TRUST HIM.
COACH OKAMOTO, WERE YOU CONSIDERING PITCHER CHANGE AT SOME POINT OF TODAY'S MATCH?
HM? WELL, I HAD A RELIEF PITCHER WARM UP, YES,
BUT LEAVING IT TO TAIYOU WAS REALLY THE ONLY OPTION IN THOSE CRUCIAL MOMENTS.
BUT LOSING IS NOT THE WAY TO GO! IT'S AN ABSOLUTE NO-NO!!!
What a grand statement!
Oh
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT WAS AN OVERLY STRICT ORDER,
BUT WE COULDN'T CRUSH THAT SOUTHPAW THAT REPLACED THEIR ACE...
THEN, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE OPPOSING TEAM REMOVING THEIR ACE, FURUYA-KUN, OFF THE MOUND SO EARLY?
...THEIR TEAM'S CIRCUMSTANCES ARE DIFFERENT...

AH, SORRY, I WAS JUST DEEPLY INTERESTED
THOSE TWO OBVIOUSLY HAVE HEALTHY RIVALRY WITH EACH OTHER, SO KATAOKA-KUN, TOO---
WAIT!
WHY THE HECK ARE YOU ASKING THE LEADER OF THE LOSING TEAM QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WINNING TEAM?!



TBC IN VOLUME 30

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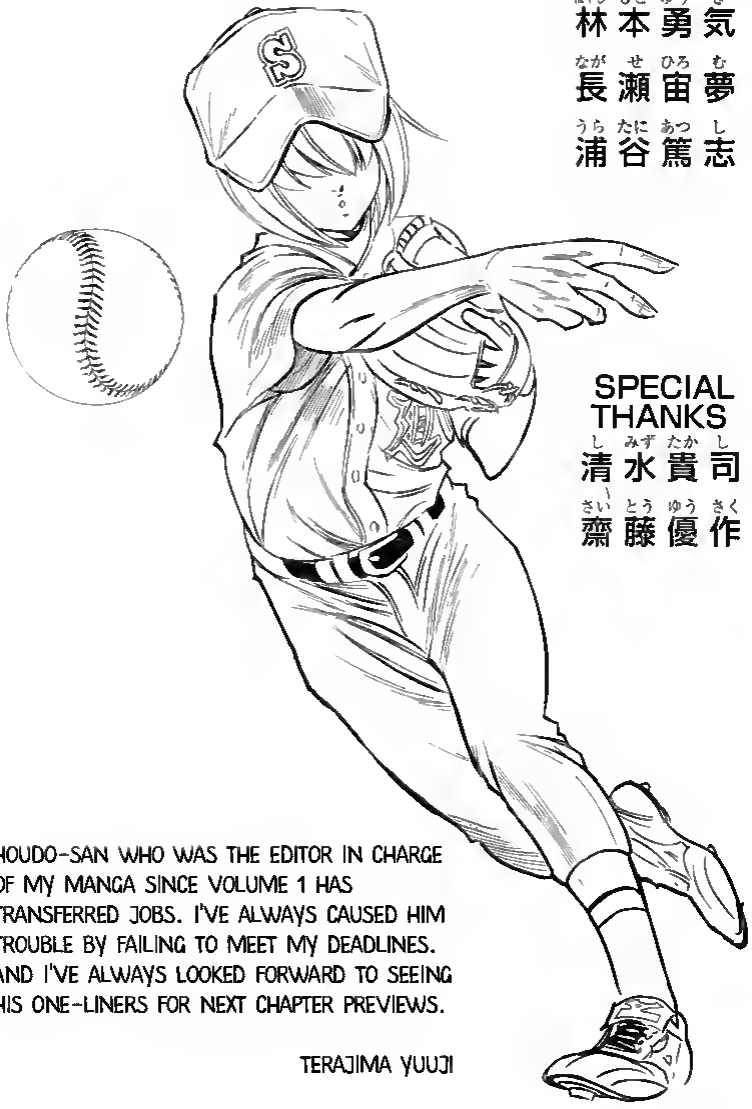

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HOUDO-SAN WHO WAS THE EDITOR IN CHARGE OF MY MANGA SINCE VOLUME 1 HAS TRANSFERRED JOBS. I'VE ALWAYS CAUSED HIM TROUBLE BY FAILING TO MEET MY DEADLINES. AND I'VE ALWAYS LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING HIS ONE-LINERS FOR NEXT CHAPTER PREVIEWS.

TERAJIMA YUUJI

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